Phoenix Community Care Ltd
Foster Care Agency
Policy & Procedure

0212 - Matching and Placement of children and Young People
Scope

This policy applies to all PCC Foster Care Agency’s employees, including:

- The Registered Person
- Team Manager

Purpose

To inform the aforementioned staff of the PCC Foster Care Agency requirements in relation to the matching and placement of children and young people with PCC foster carers.

To ensure each child or young person placed in Foster Care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting his or her assessed needs

Introduction

Matching can be defined as the process of identifying a foster family whose characteristics, skills and experience, will, as far as possible, meet the assessed needs of a child/young person or sibling group.

PCC Foster Care Agency is committed to fulfilling its duties and responsibilities in regard to the matching of children with carers as outlined in the:

- Foster Service Regulations 2011
- Foster Services: National Minimum Standards 2011 (Standard 11 & 15)
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010)

Matching Policy

On receipt of the referral by the placement co-ordinator, initial checks are carried out to ascertain if, in principle, there is an appropriate match available.

The matching process takes into account the following:-

- Child’s views if age appropriate
- Child’s age
- Gender
- Location required/schooling/contact
- Foster carer’s approval
- Ethnicity of both parties
- Culture of both parties
- Race of both parties
- Religion of both parties
- Language of both parties
- Members of carers household
- Behavioural issues
- Foster carer’s experience levels
The PCC Foster Care Agency aims to recruit as wide a range of carers as is possible, reflecting the community and cultural heritage within the agency's geographic location. The above list is not exhaustive, and attention is always given to individual needs, keeping the child at the centre of the planning process.

PCC Foster Care Agency ensures that all its foster carers, whatever their ethnic background, are able to demonstrate understanding and sensitivity issues of race, religion, language, culture, ethnicity and diversity and to promote the positive development of a child/young person’s identity.

Training and social work support are offered to foster carers as a matter of course. Additional training and support is given when trans-racial or trans-cultural placements are made.

PCC Foster Care Agency endeavors by all appropriate means to place a child or young person with foster carers of a similar background and culture to its own. It is not the policy of the agency however that the ethnic origin of a child/young person shall automatically, of itself, take precedence over the other assessed needs of the child/young person when placement needs are being considered.

PCC Foster Care Agency ensures that the needs of children/young people with disabilities are taken into account in the matching process and that appropriate support is given to carers to enable them to meet the specific needs of the child/young person placed with them.

Decisions about the most appropriate placement for a child/young person are made by a qualified social worker. PCC Foster Care Agency uses clear criteria for matching children with foster carers which is recorded within the matching forms. The Placement Plan for the child also sets out how the placement will contribute to meeting the child’s needs.

Great care is always taken in placing children who have been sexually abused or who have a history of abusing other children in order to minimise the risk to all children in the household.

PCC Foster Care Agency undertakes a general risk assessment of the living arrangements through consideration of the Safe Caring Family Policy.

PCC Foster Care Agency foster carers are always given the full information provided by the local authorities in advance of the placement matching process being agreed to ensure that they can carry out their role effectively. This is delivered by the Placement Co-ordinator and Supervising Social Worker to the foster carer in verbal and written form. The supervising social worker will offer additional face to face contact with the
carer to ensure full support is offered and to go through the written documentation to clarify any issues.

PCC Foster Care Agency is careful to request all relevant child protection information held in a child/young person’s local authority file and insist on a partnership approach to minimizing risk as part of any potential placement match.

Prior to, or on the point of placement, a risk management plan on the child is drawn up by the supervising social worker and the child’s social worker, and the child or young person, if appropriate.

When the information held by PCC Foster Care Agency falls short of the minimum required for the carer to fulfill their task, the supervising social worker will advise the agency administrative team who will contact the responsible authority and request the missing information within five working days.

**The Views of the Child/Young Person**

PCC Foster Care Agency expects the responsible authority to make every effort to seek the views of the child/young person and their family on the proposed placement.

It is important that the child/young person has as much information as possible on the foster carer’s family so that they can express an informed view about the placement.

Even in circumstances where the placement is made in an emergency, it should be possible to discuss the proposed placement with the child/young person and his/ her family and give all concerned basic minimal written information.

If the foster carers have any other foster children on placement, the local authority social worker(s) for the children will be consulted to gain their views also and a consensus arrived at.

Whenever possible, introductions should take place to enable the child or young person to have an informed view about the placement and the fostering household and feel confident that an appropriate match has been made on their behalf. Children will be encouraged to bring their favourite possessions into the foster carer’s home.

PCC Foster Care Agency supports the principle that once a child is placed, s/he should not be removed from the foster carer who is willing and able to continue to care for that child, unless it is in the child’s best interests and taking into account the child’s wishes and feelings. Any decision on moving the child should be taken through the child’s care planning process.

**Placement Protocols**

If it is felt by all relevant parties that a suitable match has been identified, the placement coordinator will liaise with the referring local authority, send the carer’s profile and Form F to them for their attention/information/ consideration.
In consultation with the carer’s supervising social worker, a detailed matching form will be completed by the placement co-ordinator stating how the carers will meet the identified needs and outcomes for the child or young person.

Once a placement has been agreed, and a moving date established, a meeting to discuss the placement plan which has been prepared by the responsible authority will take place with the child/young person, foster carers, carers supervising social worker and the child/young person’s social worker.

A risk management document will be drawn up at this initial meeting.

Safe care guidelines are provided based on a written policy and include a foster care agreement for each foster home; in consultation with the carer and everyone living in that household. Once agreed, the guidelines are explained clearly and appropriately to the child/young person including everyday household rules and expectations.

When children leave the foster family, the carers will help them understand why they are leaving. PCC Foster Care Agency will offer support, where appropriate, during the transition to their new placement, to independent living or to their parental home.

PCC Foster Care Agency promotes the maintenance of links between the child or young person and the foster carer where it is consistent with the child’s care plan.